



Reign of Fire

Four custom kitchens fit for a god

"WHAT IS ACCOMPLISHED by fire is alchemy—whether in the furnace or in the kitchen stove," wrote the medieval physician and astrologer Paracelsus. Your "fire" can come from a killer Minotti range, but the inspiration you will need to utilize it imaginatively will flow more easily when it is set into an equally gorgeous kitchen. Here we look at four companies doing top-shelf custom kitchens that boast original designs of the finest quality.



Johnny Grey

"I call it furniture instead of cabinetry," says Kevin Hackett, design director for Johnny Grey's U.S. operations. In fact, he will not even call a kitchen a kitchen, preferring to refer to it as simply "an active living space."

The design philosophy is four-pronged. First, says Hackett, "We see cabinetry as pieces of furniture with room to breathe around them." Second, each kitchen is site-specific. "We're all about understanding light variances, topography, air flow—it's a more organic, integrated approach." Third is the emphasis on a soft geometry of circular and ovoid shapes. "Not just frivolous curves," insists Hackett. Lastly, the company believes in "materials that have a clear conscience with regard to processes of manufacturing and sustainability."

AVERAGE COST: "You can't do a Johnny Grey kitchen for less than \$100,000 to \$150,000," says Hackett.

INQUIRIES: 888.640.7879, www.johnnygrey.com

Cheng Design

Berkeley designer Fu-Tung Cheng has nothing in particular against the standardized box-and-slab construction that pervades kitchen design. "I just don't think it should be the *only* choice," he says. Cheng's answer is using concrete in an innovative combination with other materials. "We work with a balance between sculpture and the realities of box-and-slab," he explains.

Concrete can also be colored, polished and otherwise treated to create an infinite variety of looks. "Then," Cheng says, "we join this with other materials like stainless steel or structural glass, so you have a sense of craftsmanship." For example, a concrete island might have a beautifully grained plank of wood or a sheet of glass cantilevered right out of it to create a table.

AVERAGE COST: \$150,000 to \$450,000.

INQUIRIES: 510.849.3272, www.chengdesign.com



WmOhs

"I wanted to make a modular product that, when you put it together, you didn't know was modular," says William Ohs. That meant offering clients an exhaustive array of what he calls "pre-engineered" options: 75 finishes (all hand-glazed); seven basic woods (maple, walnut, white oak, alder, cherry, sugar pine and mahogany); six traditional "theme stylings" (such as French Country, English Manor, Tuscany and Spanish Revival); three more modern "transitional" designs (American, European and Asian); and an Architectural Stylings program that allows you to draw from any of them to create completely personalized cabinetry.

"I try to focus on a sense of modern classicism," Ohs notes. "And I stay away from shapes that can be thought of as clever." He says his cabinetry is "frameless," by which he means they are not standard box shapes with different door styles applied to each. "All the door and drawer fronts line up flush with the frame," he says.

AVERAGE COST: "Typically \$100,000 to \$125,000," says Ohs.

INQUIRIES: 303.371.6550, www.wmohs.com



Smallbone of Devizes

This British company, established in 1976 by Charlie Smallbone in the Wiltshire town of Devizes, "preserves the fine craft traditions of English furniture making," says managing director Sally Wilkinson. "We make all our cabinetry to order. Doors are fitted with mortise-and-tenon joints and are set into frames with butt hinges—which demands great time and skill. Drawers are expertly dovetailed and moldings are carved from solid timbers." The company's styles range from traditional designs rooted in Irish Georgian furniture to the Walnut & Silver Kitchen, the newest collection, which features black walnut cabinetry with beaten-nickel handles, glass and mirrors.

"We use such diverse materials and will mix and match any feature from any of our kitchens to create a new one," says Wilkinson. "As long as the kitchen is made from materials that we use in our factories in Devizes, we will create it." And there is some great news: It has just opened its first U.S. showroom on New York's Upper East Side.

JORGE S. ARANGO

AVERAGE COST: "They tend to start at \$70,000," says Wilkinson.

INQUIRIES: 212.288.3454, www.smallboneofdevizes.com

